

From Army Posts Around the World



The first six examples of the palletized Engineer Mission Module dump truck went to the Maine Army National Guard's 133rd Engineer Battalion.

Gardiner, Maine

Engineers Get New Equipment

THE 133rd Engineer Battalion, here, has become the first field unit in the Army to receive the new Engineer Mission Module equipment. Carried on a Palletized Load System, the heavy-construction equipment can be quickly hoisted onto flatbed trucks and trailers and hauled through rugged terrain.

Delivery of the six trucks and trailers, a dozen 12-yard dump bodies, three concrete mixers and three bituminous distributors has made this Maine Army National Guard battalion the envy of combat engineer units throughout the Army — at least until others receive the new, state-of-the-art equipment. Approximately 250 engineer modules will be distributed throughout the active Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve during the next five years, said Ed Russell, the training manager for new equipment with the Army's Tank, Automotive and Armaments Command in Warren, Mich.

Maine Guard soldiers recently put the new equipment through its paces under the

supervision of two civilian trainers. Those soldiers will then show others in the 610-member battalion how it works and how to maintain it.

The 133rd has been modernized with nearly \$7 million worth of road-building and battlefield-engineer equipment since 1998, when it received nine new 20-ton dump trucks.

Hydraulic excavators, all-terrain forklifts and cranes, vibrating rollers and triangular-tracked D-7 bulldozers with blades that are automatically adjusted with lasers have also been added to the 133rd's inventory as part of the Army modernization program.

"You can do so many things with these excavators. It's good equipment," said SSG James Whitehouse, one of 60 soldiers in the battalion who have trained to handle the new machinery.

"You can dig holes with them, load trucks, dig trenches and pull stumps," Whitehouse said. "They've got a lot of power, they're very versatile and they'll go just about anywhere."

Whitehouse got acquainted with the new, off-the-shelf John Deere excavators during training in Coal Valley, Ill.

Training on the new Oshkosh Corp. equipment in southern Maine further defined

just how thoroughly the National Guard has been integrated into the total Army force during the past quarter-century. The National Guard and Army Reserve, for example, now have 73 percent of the Army's engineer assets, said a spokesman for the Army Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. — *MSG Bob Haskell, National Guard Bureau Public Affairs Office*

Camp Monteith, Kosovo

Soldiers Are Making It Happen

"IT'S the soldier on the ground who is really making a difference in Kosovo," said CPT Samuel Welch. "The U.S. military is on the forefront here by virtue of the sacrifices and efforts put forward by sergeants and privates, and the sacrifices made by their families allowing them to be here," Welch told the American Forces Press Service in a recent interview here.

About 6,100 U.S. service

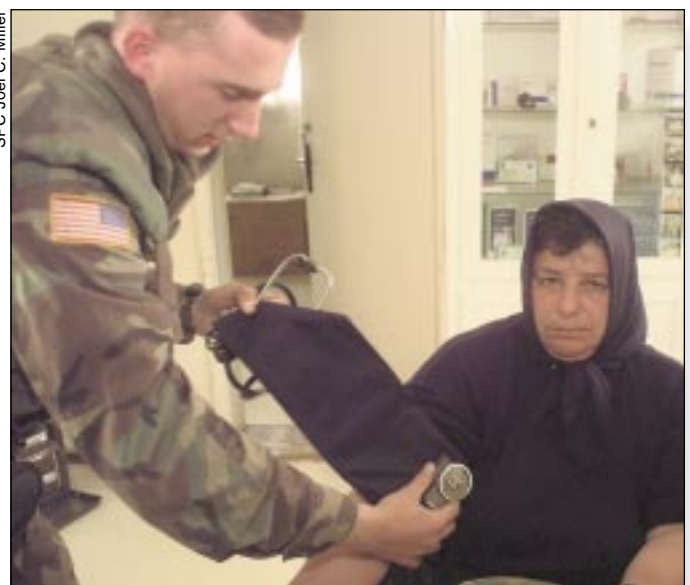
members are part of the 42,000-strong NATO-led peacekeeping force. The United States heads the eastern sector, one of five multinational brigade sectors in Kosovo. France heads the north, Germany the south, Italy the west and Great Britain the central section.

Welch is the assistant operations officer for Task Force 1st Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. The battalion, based in Vilseck, Germany, was wrapping up a six-month rotation as part of the NATO-led peacekeeping force.

Each day, U.S. soldiers serving with the NATO-led peacekeeping force safeguard people on both sides of the Kosovar-Serbian ethnic divide. They patrol borders, escort refugees and school children, settle property disputes and watch over farmers tending their crops. They also deal with murders, shootings and other violence. All the while, they also must remain ready to fight.

"It's the most challenging

SPC Joel C. Miller



PFC Josh Corsa, one of about 6,100 U.S. service members in Kosovo, checks a woman's blood pressure during a medical civilian assistance program in the town of Prekovtse.

mission of its kind I've ever seen," said MG John P. Abizaid, 1st Inf. Div. commander. "It goes all the way from police work on one side of the spectrum to being prepared to fight the Serb military conventional forces, if it becomes necessary. It shows precisely why we've got to have soldiers prepared and trained for war, not just peacekeeping — because on any given day you don't know which way the mission is going to go."

Some weeks are calm, he said, but then there will be an upsurge in violence. "I'd say overall we are probably better off than we were a year ago, but it still remains very violent and very unstable."

The Kosovo mission involves more than manning checkpoints and conducting patrols; there's also an intense human element. Welch said junior enlisted soldiers and NCOs posted in the villages pay a lot of attention to the humanitarian needs of local families.

"The key to success is having units operate frequently in the same area so they build a relationship and rapport with the villagers," he said. "When we operate in one area, for example, they ask for certain NCOs by name. They want to tell those soldiers their problems."

Battalion CSM John Drayton said it's hard for the soldiers not to form bonds with local residents, especially in small villages of just over a dozen families.

"They begin to trust you," he said. "Just the presence of the Humvees rolling down the road at night — even if they don't see them, people know they can sleep securely because there are soldiers out there."

"We see a lot of things that

make us realize we're very fortunate to be born in America," Drayton said. "People here walk two or three miles just to get water from the local well. Kids walk four kilometers to school, in the snow." His soldiers, he said, have come to realize they take simple things like being able to turn on a light for granted.

"Most of them say when they get home they'll probably never complain about anything again," he said. — *Linda D. Kozaryn, American Forces Press Service*

Camp Humphreys, Korea

"Blood Co." Trains for Korean Crisis

WHEN the enemy strikes and the wounded fill field hospital units, blood sometimes runs low. But where do you turn to fix the problem?

In Korea, it's "Blood Company" — Co. B, 16th Medical Logistics Battalion at Yongsan — which gets the call for help and quickly responds. The first stop is the Camp Humphreys Frozen Blood Storage Facility, where the soldiers thaw and clean blood reserves for immediate use.

While some soldiers of Co. B prepare the blood and palletize it for shipment, others coordinate with the 377th Medical Co., an air-ambulance unit more commonly known as "Dustoff." Other soldiers man the forklifts and five-ton trucks used to position the precious cargo for transport.

"Sling loading, setting up a blood-supply unit and simply looking at every aspect of the operation at the platoon level is the main focus here," said MAJ Kevin Belanger, Korea Area Joint Blood Program officer from the U.S. Forces, Korea, Surgeon's Office, who was an



Soldiers of the Yongsan, Korea-based Company B, 16th Medical Logistics Battalion, wrap a cargo of blood on a pallet to prepare it for shipping.

evaluator during a recent training exercise. He explained that battalion-level training is conducted during larger exercises such as the annual Ulchi Focus Lens.

"They did very well," Belanger said of the smaller exercise. "This was high-speed, and the folks are well-trained."

CPT Ammon Wynn III, company commander, agreed. "The training went real well," he said. "This is a morale booster. The realism is what charges the soldiers up."

During training, the company actually processed and cleaned only one box of blood. The remaining boxes used in the exercise were simulated supplies. Once thawed, cleaned and repacked, the shipment was placed on a pallet and

tightly wrapped in plastic, then carefully mounted on a sling.

The sling was then forklifted onto a five-ton truck and transported to the end of Desiderio Army Airfield, where the Dustoff UH-60s soon arrived.

"This was very realistic training," said 2LT Grace Toro, blood platoon leader. "It gives the soldiers a chance to practice their skills and to see the key role that each one of them plays in the mission."

"Everyone gets hands-on training and a chance to do a little of everything needed for the operation. We're really motivated," said PFC Nubia Florez. "It's very significant training, because we all need to practice. We have to know how to act and react." — *Bob Warner, Area III PAO*